

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARKEY ASKS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL, NONPROLIFERATION ASSESSMENT OF SURPLUS PLUTONIUM DISPOSITION PLAN**

*Lawmaker questions whether U.S. plan is safe, and whether Russian plan is on track*

**Washington, D.C.** --Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and co-chairman of the Bipartisan Task Force on Nonproliferation, today released a letter to Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Abraham regarding DOE's surplus plutonium disposition plan.

"I'm concerned that DOE's program for disposing of excess plutonium may be fraught with environmental, nonproliferation, technical, and budgetary uncertainty," said Rep. Markey. "Moreover, while this program was always intended to happen in parallel with a Russian program to dispose of its excess plutonium, it's not at all clear that the Russian program is on track."

In September 2000, the United States and Russia agreed to a hybrid or "dual-track" approach for disposing of surplus nuclear weapons plutonium. This plan called for the U.S. to immobilize and bury some of its excess plutonium and to fabricate the rest into mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) rods for use as fuel in civilian nuclear power reactors. On January 23, 2002, DOE announced that it has cancelled its dual-track policy and now plans to convert most of the plutonium slated for immobilization into MOX fuel. In the meantime, the MOX plant in Hanau Germany that was intended to be used for disposition of the Russian plutonium is reported to be slated for demolition, raising questions about whether moving forward with the U.S. plan means that the U.S. will be unilaterally disposing of its plutonium.

Rep. Markey's letter asks questions related to:

- Whether the DOE has performed the necessary technical, economic and nonproliferation analysis and Environmental Impact Statements regarding the proposed changes to the program.
- What schedule the DOE will use to ship plutonium from Rocky Flats and other sites to the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, and what the long-term storage plan for the plutonium is.
- Whether the DOE plans to proceed with unilateral disposition of U.S. plutonium in the absence of a legally binding U.S.-Russia agreement that ensures there is also a clear plan and schedule for Russian plutonium disposition.

"Processing plutonium into MOX fuel violates two fundamental taboos. It creates a commercial market for weapons-grade nuclear materials and it blurs the long-standing distinction between civilian and military applications of nuclear technology," stated Rep. Markey. "Why would we choose to move forward with this dangerous scheme if Russia isn't disposing of its plutonium at all?"

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